

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4592
INFO AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO

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SANTO DOMINGO FOR AGATT

EO 11652 N/A
TAGS: EAID, HA
SUBJECT: PROPOSED FY 1977 TITLE I INCREASE

REF: (A) PORT AU PRINCE 1187, (B) PORT AU PRINCE 1129, (C) STATE
73615

1. SUMMARY: HAITI'S CURRENT PROBLEMS INCLUDE DROUGHT,
CROP FAILURES, INCREASINGLY SEVERE FOOD SHORTAGES, INCREASING
MALNUTRITION, INADEQUATE DRINKING WATER, AND A
MAJOR ELECTRIC SHORTAGE. THE SITUATION WORSENS DAILY.
THE NEED FOR THE RICE AND CORN IS CLEAR AND THE EMBASSY
RECOMMENDS PROMPT APPROVAL OF THE GOH REQUEST FOR
10,000 TONS EACH OF TITLE I RICE AND CORN. END SUMMARY.

2. DROUGHT AND CROP FAILURES ARE EVIDENT IN MOST OF
HAITI FROM PORT AU PRINCE ON NORTH. CONDITIONS ARE NOW
WORSE THAN DURING THE 1974-75 DROUGHT AND ARE CONTINUING
TO DETERIORATE. IT APPEARS THAT MORE THAN TWO MILLION
PEOPLE ARE SUFFERING INCREASING HARDSHIP, RANGING FROM
INCONVENIENCE TO STARVATION. THE EMBASSY PROPOSES
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THAT THE PROBLEM BE FACED IN A COORDINATED FASHION:
INCREASED TITLE II SHIPMENTS, AS PREVIOUSLY RECOMMENDED,
TO PROVIDE DIRECT RELIEF TO THE ISOLATED NORTHWEST AND
ISLAND OF GONAVE; AND AN AUGMENTATION OF THE TITLE I
PROGRAM WITH 10,000 TONS EACH OF RICE AND CORN IN
ORDER TO BUILD UP GRAIN STOCKS TO MINIMUM LEVELS. MOST
OF THE SUFFERING TWO MILLION PEOPLE COULD BE EXPECTED

TO BENEFIT DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY FROM THE INCREASED SHIPMENTS.

3. THE DROUGHT IS, OF COURSE, HURTING LARGE NUMBERS OF SUBSISTENCE FARMERS AND OTHERS NOT USUALLY ASSOCIATED WITH THE CASH ECONOMY. IT IS ALSO HURTING LARGE NUMBERS OF URBAN POOR AND EVEN THOSE WHO PASS FOR A HAITIAN MIDDLE CLASS WITH INCOMES OF \$30-200 PER MONTH. WE ALREADY ARE ADDRESSING THE RELIEF NEEDS OF THE RURAL POOR IN THE NORTH AND ON THE ISLAND OF GONAVE THROUGH TITLE II. HOWEVER, THE OVERALL GRAIN STOCKS ARE SO INADEQUATE AND PRICES ARE SO HIGH THAT THE RELIEF PROGRAMS ALONE WILL BE INADEQUATE. WE CONSIDER RELIEF PROGRAMS SUPPLEMENTS TO COMMERCIAL MARKETS, NOT REPLACEMENTS. THE 10,000 TONS EACH OF RICE AND CORN REQUESTED BY THE GOH THROUGH TITLE I APPEAR TO BE THE MINIMUM NEEDED TO START BUILDING UP FOOD SUPPLIES AND DRIVE PRICES DOWN TO THE MORE REASONABLE LEVELS THAT THE POOR PEOPLE CAN AFFORD. THE GOH IS ALREADY POLICING MARKUPS ON PREVIOUSLY IMPORTED FOODS WITH INTENT TO CONTROL PROFITEERING. WE WOULD EXPECT SIMILAR EFFORT IN THIS CASE.

4. THE EMBASSY CONSIDERS THE HAITIAN MARKET SYSTEM CAPABLE OF DISTRIBUTING THE REQUESTED COMMODITIES AND, PERHAPS, EVEN MORE.

5. SPRING RAINS ARE A PHENOMENON OF THE SOUTHERN PENINSULA AND, OCCASIONALLY, THE ARTIBONITE VALLEY
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AND THE PLATEAU CENTRALE. SHOULD THEY ARRIVE, DAMAGE TO SPRING RICE CROPS MIGHT BE KEPT TO THE MODEST LEVELS PROJECTED IN REF B. SHOULD THEY FAIL, CROPS WILL FAIL AGAIN AND MORE PEOPLE WILL BE HUNGRY. THE NORTH COAST RAINS USUALLY ARRIVE IN SEPTEMBER-DECEMBER AND NOT IN THE SPRING. THE FAILURE OF THE FALL RAINS IN 1976 CAUSED THE CROP FAILURE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ONGOING FAMINE. WE DO NOT ANTICIPATE A HARVEST IN THE NORTHWEST UNTIL THE SPRING OF 1978.

6. COUNTERPART FUNDS WOULD BE HANDLED IN THE SAME WAY AS THOSE GENERATED FROM THE EXISTING AGREEMENT WITH EMPHASIS ON PROGRAMS TO STIMULATE GRAIN PRODUCTION.

7. WE WILL BE REPORTING SEPARATELY ON TITLE II RELIEF REQUIREMENTS AND ARRANGEMENTS NEEDED TO SUPPLEMENT INCREASED OVERALL GRAIN AVAILABILITY PROVIDED BY THE TITLE I REQUEST.
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